

NEWARK
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Press Release:

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 13, 1990

FOR RELEASE, SUNDAY, DECEMBER 16, 1990

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ARCHDIOCESE TO RELOCATE TO NORTH NEWARK

The Newark Municipal Council is expected to act this week on the sale of certain city-owned properties in the North Ward to the Archdiocese of Newark.

Approval of the \$108,300 sale brings the Archdiocese a step closer to finalizing plans to build a multi-million dollar, mixed-use, office-residential project in North Newark near the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, according to City officials.

The proposed development will allow the Archdiocese to centralize its operation near the mother church by relocating its headquarters from Mulberry Street to Park Avenue.

This move makes possible the acquisition of the Archdiocese's downtown properties by the New Jersey Performing Arts Corporation (NJ PAC), whose planned \$200 million arts and cultural center would encompass the existing buildings, as well as an adjacent site.

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Mayor Sharpe James said the City has been working with the Archdiocese for over four years to plan and assemble the new site, which is bounded by Clifton, Park and Mt. Prospect Avenues.

A major portion of the development site is the land on which the old Thomm's Restaurant was located. The North Newark landmark was destroyed by fire several years ago, and the City acquired the property through foreclosure.

A 157,000 square foot, multi-story, modern office building will rise on the site to house and centralize the Archdiocesan administration, including such services as school administration, pastoral counseling and various Catholic charities that serve North Jersey. These offices are currently located throughout Essex County.

Diocesan officials expect 350 employees, including professional and clerical staff, will be located in the building.

Also included in the development plan, which has been approved by Newark's Central Planning Board and City Council, is the construction of 16 townhouse units for low and moderate income residents on Mt. Prospect Avenue.

The Mayor said the project "underscores" his administration's concern to stabilize and rebuild Newark's neighborhoods with housing and employment opportunities.

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He maintained, "The Archdiocese should be commended for its commitment, its investment and its faith in our city, and for having the foresight to see that Newark is a great place to work, reside and enjoy.

"Projects such as this, along with other neighborhood developments, including Hovnanian's Society Hill, the New Community's shopping center and Blue Cross/Blue Shield's decision to move its headquarters back to Newark make a difference in the rebirth of our city," he said.

Msgr. Franklyn Casale, the Archdiocese's Vicar General for public affairs, said, "Historically, the Archdiocese has supported the City's renaissance efforts. We are particularly happy that this agreement will allow the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart to continue to be a focal point in this great city, and we are pleased to be part of the effort to bring new life and stability to the City of Newark."

Sacred Heart, dedicated in 1954, is a national historic landmark, which towers at the edge of Branch Brook Park and is one of the nation's great cathedrals, equal in size to Westminster Abbey.

Alfred Faiella, executive director of the Newark Economic Development Corporation (NEDC), noted, "Construction of this facility will help stabilize a once very fine neighborhood that has seen some deterioration.

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"Additionally, one of the truly great landmarks in the City of Newark, the Sacred Heart Cathedral, is nearby, and it seems appropriate for the Archdiocese to build this structure in the shadow of that great church," he said.

NEDC and the City's Department of Development have been working with the Archdiocese and have helped them with the redevelopment plans and approvals needed to start the construction project, Faiella noted.

Harold Lucas, Newark's director of development, said the project is excellent for the City because it stabilizes and renews this neighborhood. "Newark not only receives payment for its property, but also new jobs and new housing for low income persons as part of the developer's contribution."

According to North Ward Councilman Anthony Carrino, the project will "completely change and accelerate the rebirth of a neighborhood which has been somewhat stagnant and deteriorating. Along with the nearby housing and development by St. Lucy's Church, this undertaking will hasten the redevelopment and growth of this entire area."